

REMARKS

The claims now presented for consideration are Claims 1-21, the independent claims being Claims 1, 7, and 13. Claims 1, 7, and 13 have been amended to improve their form and to more clearly recite the present invention. No new matter has been added.

Initially, Applicant's representatives thank the Examiner's supervisor for the cordial and productive personal interview held on December 10, 2003. At the interview, the cited art was discussed and Applicant's representatives discussed amending the claims to more clearly define the invention. The Examiner's supervisor was amenable to the proposed claim changes, and those proposals are being presented herein in an earnest attempt to advance prosecution.

In the Office Action, claims 1-21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,452,068 to Farrell. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Independent claims 1, 7, and 13 of the present invention relate to an image input and output method, an image input and output apparatus, and an image processing system, respectively. Each of these claims has been amended herein to recite that, after a preceding image input job is finished, a subsequent image input job is started while an image output job corresponding to the preceding image input job is being executed.

Applicant asserts that at least these features of the present invention are not taught by the Farrell patent.

As discussed at the interview, the Farrell patent is directed to an apparatus and method for reducing productivity losses in a marking engine. In a preferred embodiment, the Farrell patent teaches performing a first print job that incorporates a finishing process. The finishing process is often slow relative to the printing of the first print job, so the first print job must be frequently stopped to await completion of the finishing process. To minimize the inefficiency inherent in this delay, the Farrell patent teaches at least part-performance of a second print job during the delay. The second print job (and other subsequent print jobs) are held in a job queue until they are printed.

However, the Farrell patent does not teach or suggest that after a preceding image input job is finished, a subsequent image input job is started while an image input job corresponding to the preceding image input job is being executed. In particular, the Farrell patent teaches only that input jobs are stored in a print queue to await commencement. Nowhere does the Farrell patent teach or suggest the temporal relationship between these input jobs and corresponding output jobs, as recited in independent claims 1, 7, and 13.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicant submits that each of independent claims 1, 7, and 13 is patentably distinguished over the cited patent. Applicant requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejection.

Claims 2-6, 8-12, and 14-21 each depend from one of the independent claims. Applicant submits that each of these claims also should be deemed allowable, in their own right, for defining other patentable features of the present invention in addition to

those recited in their respective independent claims. Further individual consideration of each dependent claim is requested.

Applicant submits that this application is in condition for allowance.

Favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action, and early passage to issue are requested.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mark A. Williamson", written over a horizontal line.

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